Green Bay Mike and Key Club hosts annual Field Day

BY CASSI GARRISON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

GREEN BAY – Every year, tens of thousands of amateur radio operators across North America take part in the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) Field Day, an annual operating event and competition organized by the National Association for Amateur Radio.

As part of the event, the Green Bay Mike and Key Club set up a temporary transmitting station at Osprey Point in Bellevue from Saturday, June 27, to Sunday, June 28, demonstrating the science and skill of amateur radio.

The 24-hour event consisted of members making radio contacts using voice and Morse code, competing against other chapters to make as many contacts as possible while also welcoming visitors to learn about amateur radio, also known as ham radio.

Field Day also serves as an important test of emergency preparedness for the community, according to local Mike and Key Club President Bill Duveneck.

"During Field Day, all of our power is coming from a generator," Duveneck said. "So, if all of the power went off in Brown County, this is a practice for us to see how we could do it."

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Cassi Garrison photo

In the case of emergency, ham radios are able to provide critical information when the internet is down, serving as a vital form of communication when regular systems fail.

"A good example of that is Hurricane Katrina back in 2005," said club member Paul Racine. "When all the communications and power went down, hams came in and set up stations like this. They could send messages out of the area to let families know that their loved ones are okay or to pass on important emergency information."

Racine added that the technology of ham radios allows for communication across the world — or even beyond it.

"We can communicate through satellites, because ham radio operators put their own satellites in orbit," Racine said. "We can talk to hams in the space station, and I have a certificate indicating that I spoke with a ham in the space station."

This technology even allows computers to send data to each other without the internet, using radio signals and the ionosphere, a region of Earth's upper atmosphere filled with charged particles like electrons and ions.

"If you can visualize, instead of using the internet to tie this computer to another one… We're using radio signals bouncing off the ionosphere," said Racine. "So, there's no internet required. There's no electricity required either, because we can provide our own through generators and batteries."

The Green Bay Mike and Key Club has over 100 members, meeting once a month at St. Norbert College in De Pere.

Joining the club and becoming a ham radio operator is open to anyone of any age. The only requirement to become an operator is earning a license from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Mike and Key Club offers help to pass the required exam.

"We have trainings, and when we have enough people that are interested, we put together a class," Duveneck said. "To operate a ham radio, you need to have a license from the federal government, just like a radio station. You have to pass a 35-question test, but it's very easy. You can learn it in one full day if you're interested in it."

For more information on the local Mike and Key Club, visit them on Facebook at "Green Bay Mike and Key Club."

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